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ABSTRACT

The assessment process is necessary to determine what adults need to know in order to do what they need to do--that is, to be literate. The characteristics of "good" assessment need to be identified using multiple indicators that determine progress toward goals for learners, programs, and policies. Ongoing learner-centered assessment must include needs assessment, skills appraisal, student placement, progress monitoring, and certification. Assessment must focus on essential competencies, include authentic performance-based processes, and be appropriate for diverse age and ethnic groups, learning levels, and learner goals. Some assessment tools include intake and progress interviews, work samples, and behavioral checklists. A comprehensive assessment system can be implemented at the local program level that provides the learner, the team of professionals, and the funding sources the accurate information needed to make decisions that have an impact on learning and programs. If a comprehensive and systematic assessment plan is implemented at the local program level, program staff will be able to provide for the needs of learners, instructors, and policymakers. One such plan is the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) developed by the California Department of Education. (This document describes CASAS and includes 88 references.) (KC)

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April 23, 1991

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Assessment in Adult Literacy Programs

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What do adults need to know in order to do what they need to do? This is a key question in adult literacy and assessment is key to the answer. The national goal for adult literacy and citizenship broadly identifies the desired outcome from a national perspective, namely that

> "By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship."

While this statement addresses the Who, Where, What, When and Why in general terms, many questions remain unanswered. The "end" or desired outcomes must be identified specifically in order to identify the best "means" for achieving them. How is "literate" to be defined? What knowledge and skills are

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necessary--as an individual and/or as a nation--to compete in a global economy? How will we know if and when we have achieved this goal?

The National Summit recognized the role of assessment stating

> "National education goals will be meaningless unless progress towards meeting them is measured accurately and adequately..."

The task at hand, then, is to define what adult Americans need to know in order to function in both the economy and polity, whether they possess the necessary knowledge and skills, and if not, what learning needs to take place and how it is to be measured. Assessment is the key component in the process at each step along the way.

The pluralistic nature of our society suggests the need for a pluralistic solution and may explain the loose consensus that prevails in defining literacy. While it is commonly agreed that adult functioning is inhibited without the ability to read, write, compute, speak and understand English, others, particularly the American business community, feel that metacognitive skills such as knowing how to learn, creative thinking and problem solving along with personal management, group effectiveness and organizational effectiveness and leadership are needed if, as a nation we are to maintain a competitive economic edge. Regardless of whether one defines literacy from a societal or individual perspective, it is only through skills and progress assessment that we will know if and to what extent our literacy goal has been achieved.

Assessment and accountability dominate discussions of educational reform and policymakers and practitioners alike must address the broader issues in establishing performance indicators that accurately measure progress toward the stated goals. Assessment must be designed to provide accountability and

instructional decision making. It needs to be compatible with Adult Learning Theory and learning styles research recognizing the differences and distinctions inherent in adult literacy acquisition.

The characteristics of "good" assessment need to be identified using multiple indicators which determine progress toward goals at the learner, program and policy levels. Learner centered assessment must be ongoing and include needs assessment, skills appraisal, student placement, progress monitoring and certification. Assessment must focus on essential competencies, include authentic performance based processes and be appropriate for diverse age and ethnic groups, learning levels and learner goals. Learners have a shared responsibility for monitoring both personal progress and assessment of curriculum and instruction relative to their needs.

Performance assessment should mirror and support good instruction. Ongoing assessment must play an integral role in the educational instructional process. Program centered assessment must evaluate the program's effectiveness in meeting the needs of its adult learners through client based lesson plans. It must also assess staff training and development along with the availability and allocation of other pertinent resources. Policy centered assessment must establish norms for performance using assessment instruments which allow the aggregation and reporting of data. It must examine the use of test results as they promote or deny access to continued educational and/or workplace opportunity. Policy centered assessment will identify the most critical factors in providing quality cost-effective programs. Assessment must be criterion-based, measuring performance which determines progress toward achievement of the national education goals. Because the stakes are high for all involved, the mandate is clear. Solutions to these problems need to be forthcoming in a timely fashion if we hope to achieve our goal as individuals and as a nation.

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Learner Centered Assessment System
to
Measure Basic Literacy Skills

Basic Literacy Skills	Assessment*				
			Performance Based		
	Selected Responses	Generated Responses	Tasks	Projects	Portfolios
Reading — Underlying basic skills / life skill application					
Writing — Underlying basic skills / life skill application					
Math — Underlying basic skills / life skill application					
Listening — Underlying basic skills / life skill application					
Oral Communication — Underlying basic skills / life skill application					
Learning to Learn					
Creative Thinking/ Problem Solving					
Self-Esteem/Goal Setting/ Motivation					
Interpersonal/Negotiation/ Teamwork					
Organizational Effectiveness/ Leadership					
Other					

Assessment Purposes for Learners
1 Appraisal/Placement
2 Diagnosis
3 Progress Monitoring
4 Certification

Assessment Purposes for Program/Policy
A Allocate Resources
B Staff Development
C Program Improvement/Evaluation
D Accountability

*Pencil & Paper Instruments, Computer-based Instruments, Simulations, Demonstrations, Observation rating scales, Other

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CASAS Scaled Score Interpretation

Below 200. Adults scoring below a 200 scale score [Beginning Adult Basic Education (ABE)/English As a Second Language (ESL)] have difficulty with the basic literacy and computational skills necessary to function in an employment setting and/or in the community. These adults can handle routine, entry-level jobs but are often limited to jobs requiring only the most basic oral communication in a setting in which all tasks can be demonstrated. These adults have difficulty providing basic personal identification in written form, are not able to compute wages and deductions on paychecks, and cannot follow basic written directions or safety procedures.

200 through 214. Adults scoring between 200 and 214 scale scores can function in intermediate level ABE and ESL programs requiring minimal literacy skills. They are able to satisfy basic survival needs and some limited social demands. Adults scoring at this level can function in entry-level jobs that require simple oral communication skills where performance tasks are demonstrated. They can provide some basic written information and perform only basic computation.

215 through 224. Adults scoring between 215 and 224 scale scores are functioning above a basic literacy level and are considered to be at an advanced ABE/ESL level. They are able to perform basic literacy tasks and computational skills in a functional employment setting. They are generally able to function in jobs or job training that involves following oral and written instructions and diagrams. They usually have difficulty following more complex sets of directions.

225 and Above. Adults scoring at or above a 225 scale score can generally perform at a high school entry level in basic reading or math. If they do not have a high school diploma, they can profit from instruction in General Education Development (GED) preparation and have a high probability of passing the GED test in a short time. They can usually perform work that involves following oral and written directions in familiar and some unfamiliar situations.

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Percentages of Adult Learners and Selected Reading Tasks At or Above Successive Points on the CASAS Scale – N = 26,771

Selected Tasks at Decreasing Levels of Difficulty		Highest Grade Level Completed				Native Language			Highest Degree Earned			
		0-7	8-9	10-11	12+	English	Spanish	Other	None	GED	HS	Other
223	Performance Appraisal	36.8	43.6	55.0	75.8	57.3	48.8	46.7	61.0	64.8	72.8	49.2
215	Employment Cover Letter	48.8	63.9	69.7	76.6	70.7	64.3	55.6	65.9	73.0	74.4	68.4
204	Interviewing for a Job	72.4	82.2	87.2	92.4	87.6	85.2	74.9	84.0	88.9	90.7	87.7

WHEN YOU LOOK FOR A JOB

HOW to Look

1. Apply in person, whenever possible, and ask to talk to the person who does the hiring for the employer or company.
2. Contact the person who hires during the hours of the day or days of the week that they most frequently hire. Don't apply during the lunch hour or after working hours and don't take friends or relatives with you.
3. Whenever possible, ask for a specific job or types of work you are willing (and qualified) to take. Stress your qualifications for the job and your interest in it. Avoid talking about your personal problems.
4. Be realistic when discussing wages with prospective employers.
5. File written applications for work whenever you have the chance to do so.
6. Make repeat contacts with employers but only if you are encouraged to do so by the employer.
7. Use the telephone only to obtain leads and make appointments for job interviews. Do not attempt to conduct job interviews by phone unless the employer requests that it be done or you know the employer personally.

Reading Test Item – RIT 204

According to the advice above, what should you not talk about during an interview?

(Selected response - 4 choices)

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Reading Test Items

RIT 215

1722 Russell Circle
San Diego, CA 92301
May 20, 1990

Miss Pat Dixon
P.O. Box 92
San Jose, CA 92621

Dear Miss Dixon:

In answer to your advertisement for a child-care worker in last Sunday's *Newstime*, I would like to apply for the position. I am 18 years old and about to graduate from Bradley High School.

At present, I am working part-time at the Bradley Child-Care Center. My supervisor there is Mrs. Betty Johnson.

I plan to work full-time after graduation and would like to learn more about caring for children. May I have an interview at your convenience? I am sure I could do a good job for you as a child-care worker.

Sincerely yours,

Bonnie Smith

Bonnie Smith

What information does Bonnie give concerning the dates she has worked at her present job?

(Selected response - 4 choices)

RIT 223

Performance Appraisal

QUALITY OF WORK Accuracy Economy of Materials Economy of Time (his own and others) Neatness Thoroughness Effectiveness	Work below quality requirements. Improvement is required. ☐	Work usually satisfies quality requirements. ☒	Quality high. Work very well done. Consistently meets and sometimes exceeds performance requirements. ☐	Work is superior. Quality of work consistently high and frequently exceeds performance requirements. ☐
QUANTITY OF WORK Productive Output Speed and Consistency of Output	Output below job requirements. Improvement is required. ☒	Output usually satisfies job requirements. ☐	Output continually meets and sometimes exceeds job requirements. ☐	Output very high and frequently exceeds job requirements. ☐
MERIT INCREASE GUIDELINES	MINIMUM	ACCEPTABLE	GOOD	SUPERIOR

When would this form be used?

(Selected response - 4 choices)

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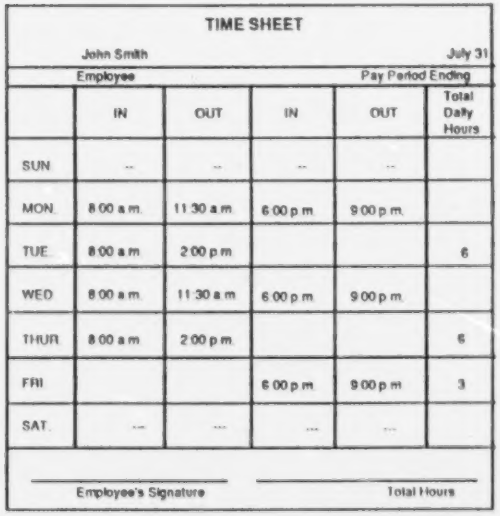
Percentages of Adult Learners and Selected Math Tasks At or Above Successive Points on the CASAS Scale – N = 26,771

Selected Tasks at Decreasing Levels of Difficulty		Highest Grade Level Completed				Native Language			Highest Degree Earned			
		0-7	8-9	10-11	12+	English	Spanish	Other	None	GED	HS	Other
225	Calculating Sales Tax	45.6	52.2	59.3	72.0	56.5	60.5	68.0	55.0	64.0	69.9	62.5
215	Calculating Amount for Textbooks	62.7	71.3	76.7	83.4	74.5	75.9	77.6	73.4	78.3	81.8	74.4
203	Calculating Hours Worked for Time Sheet	80.5	86.5	89.1	91.9	87.7	89.0	88.6	87.5	89.0	90.9	89.7



TIME SHEET

John Smith — July 31

Employee — Pay Period Ending

	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	Total Daily Hours
SUN	--	--	--	--	
MON	8:00 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	6:00 p.m.	9:00 p.m.	
TUE	8:00 a.m.	2:00 p.m.			6
WED	8:00 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	6:00 p.m.	9:00 p.m.	
THUR	8:00 a.m.	2:00 p.m.			6
FRI			6:00 p.m.	9:00 p.m.	3
SAT	---	---	---	---	

Employee's Signature _____ Total Hours _____

Math Test Item – RIT 203

What is the total number of hours John worked on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday?

(Selected response - 4 choices)

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Math Test Items

RIT 215

ELECTRONICS ASSEMBLY COURSE DESCRIPTION

Total number of weeks per course: 13 — Fee: None

Number of days per week: 5 — Instructor: Mr. Thomas

Number of hours per day: 6

This course is designed to provide instruction in Basic Electronic Assembly. It covers reading schematics, reading color-coded resistors, and identification of electronic components. It includes the proper use of tools and the safety procedures necessary to avoid accidents in the shop.

Each student must take written tests, complete the required number of projects, and attend class regularly.

MATERIALS:

Electronic Assembly Methods	$17.01
N.A.S.A. Quality Publication	2.75
Allied Electronics Data Handbook	5.65
Dictionary of Electronics Terms	1.50
Student Notebook	

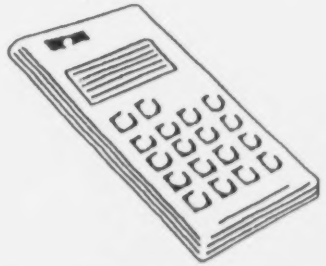
If a student buys Electronic Assembly Methods, Allied Electronics Data Handbook, and Dictionary of Electronics Terms, how much will he spend on books for this course?

(Selected response - 4 choices)

RIT 225

8 digit Calculator

CAPACITY MEMORY: 8 digit. Red light display. No memory.
ARITHMETIC FUNCTIONS: Adds, subtracts, multiplies, divides. Does repeat addition, subtraction, chain and mixed calculations.
SPECIAL FUNCTIONS: Percent key, floating decimal. Minus & overflow indicators.
CONSTRUCTION: Brown plastic. 5 1/4 x 2 1/4 x 1-in. Imported.
ELECTRICAL INFORMATION: 9-volt battery included. Adapter sold separately.
ORDERING INFO.: Instructions included. 3G580140 Shipping weight 5 oz....$6.84



PAGE NUMBER	CATALOG NUMBER	NAME OF ITEM	PRICE FOR ONE	TOTAL PRICE*

* Add 6% Sales Tax to Total Price

How much sales tax would you pay if you ordered five calculators?

(Selected response - 4 choices)

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Rickard, P., R. Stiles et al. (in press)
The Essential Role of Assessment. Adult Learning.
(May 1991) Volume 2, Number 7. Washington, D.C.

The Essential Role of Assessment

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THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is to educational and instructional goals as maps are to travelers and their destination. When the purpose for the educational or instructional services is clear and explicit to the learner, and directly related to the learner's goals, then comprehensive and authentic observations (assessment) can be made to communicate the learner's relation to the desired outcome or destination. Without defined long range learning outcomes for the learner, and the learner's present status in relation to the outcomes, the utility and value for any assessment, (no matter how good and authentic), becomes relatively meaningless and confusing and to some, downright irritating.

If goals and outcomes are the destination, and assessment provides the indications on a map (learning plan) to guide the learner to the destination, then any discussion of assessment must be linked to a discussion of the relevancy of goals and outcomes and the consequence of the learning plan with them. This is true for the individual learner and program managers, state and federal policymakers, and funding sources.

In striving towards accountability some critical questions need to be answered such as: Is there national agreement on what the learning outcomes should be and which should be measured? Do these outcomes match those of the learners? How can meaningful standards of outcome attainment be established? Is more testing the answer to educational reform? How can local programs implement an assessment system that provides both clear indicators on a road map, addressing individual learner goals as well as providing for program accountability to policymakers and funding sources? Accountability for public dollars demands feedback on "bottom line" issues of learning outcomes and goal attainment.

The most visible example of a nationally desired outcome are the national goals for education. One of these goals addresses adult literacy and citizenship:

> "Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights

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and responsibilities of citizenship."

The education report from the White House makes the strong statement that these national goals will be meaningless unless progress toward meeting them is measured accurately and adequately, and reported to the American people. In order to do this, what learners need to know must be defined, and it must be determined whether they know it through the use of accurate, comparable, appropriate, and constructive measurements.

There is a need to define what the adult learner/worker needs to know--now and in the future. How will literacy be defined? What are the competencies that adults will need to compete and succeed in the 21st century? Current definitions of literacy range from "be able to read..." to the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) definition that provides for reading, writing and math tasks, to more comprehensive definitions such as the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) definition that expand the definition to include the essential skills that employers want such as listening and oral communication, problem solving, teamwork, organizational effectiveness and leadership.

Many federal programs have now made basic skills a priority. In each of these, there are curriculum implications and related assessment issues. JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act) programs are expected to be accountable for employment related outcomes, job placements and increased employability potential. Local programs are expected to provide relevant curriculum both in educational and workplace settings that provide the learner with effective learning opportunities leading to these outcomes. Assessment should provide information on the participants' progress toward these goals.

SLIAG (State Legalization Impact Assistance Grant) programs focus on goals related to civics and citizenship and provide for learners who speak little or no English and who may not be literate in their native language. The Adult Basic Education Act addresses the issue of standards for adult literacy and provides guidelines for assessing adult learners who enroll in ABE programs with a wide variety of goals and expected

outcomes. The learner's plan must address special·individual learner goals. It must also provide assessment that measures not only the tangible literacy skills that have been acquired but also the very real but difficult to assess outcomes such as an increase in self esteem, and establishment of lifelong learning goals.

People use maps to find a desirable route to their destination- some want the quickest, others may want one with points of interest along the way. Their map is used to reference how far they have come and how far they have to go and to generate additional options. Likewise, assessment should help learners move toward their goals and it should be able to tell them how long it will take. Learners are assessed to: place them into programs and levels, to prescribe a specific learning plan, to monitor progress through the plan on an ongoing basis, to certify competency attainment and goal completion.

Good assessment, good curriculum and instructional practices go hand in hand in forming an effective individual learning plan. The plan includes many strategies and tactics for instructing, assessing and reinforcing learning. Just as no single teaching strategy is effective for all learners in all situations, no single assessment instrument or process is adequate in providing quality information to all learners for all purposes.

Test results typically attempt to reveal what learners know or what they can do rather than how they will use what they know or what they will be able to do after "getting trained or educated". Assessment focused on knowledge and the "present" doesn't guarantee application outside the classroom or meaning for future life and work goals.

Assessment must be more authentic and address the measurement and prediction of what learners will do or what they will produce and how they will most likely perform. Results should reveal the quality and level of production that the learner will probably demonstrate on the job and as a citizen. Such assessment incorporates and integrates learners' skills, knowledge and attitudes as in social interactions and leadership. Such assessment must be more dynamic and comprehensive by including opportunities for learners to demonstrate skills, including writing samples, assessment

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portfolios, interviews, and work samples. A variety of strategies should incorporate pencil and paper assessment with selected and constructed responses, applied performance tests, computer simulations, oral communication and listening comprehension, observation rating scales, and opportunities to demonstrate group interaction and team work situations.

Applied performance tests measure a learner's performance on tasks significant to life outside the school, in other words, to actual adult life situations. Performance is measured beyond simply adding and subtracting. For example, the basic skills are applied in the writing of a check correctly at a grocery counter and then calculating the checking account balance. Rather than choosing the proper grammar for a paragraph, the learner must be able to write a properly organized letter as part of a job application. The learner demonstrates mastery of skills in the context of a real life task or in a simulated setting that closely matches "reality." Standardized administrative procedures including criteria for scoring and standardized formats for reporting performance are used for applied performance tests.

Assessment portfolios are a collection of a learner's work similar to that of an artist's presentation of his/her creative work. Learners can develop portfolios of their work in reading, math and writing to include both in-class and out-of-class work. Learners and instructors meet periodically to discuss the learner's work and how it is progressing.

These meetings allow for assessment of the learner's metacognitive skills as well as cognitive skills. Metacognition refers to the learner's self-awareness of his/her cognitive strengths and weaknesses, as well as the match between his/her cognitive resources and the task encountered. Learners are trained to monitor and evaluate their own work and make generalizations from a reading or math task to application in a life setting. A portfolio can be developed that combines competencies obtained in basic skills instruction with job skill competencies. The portfolio can then be presented to an employer as partial evidence of the learner's overall employability.

Intake and progress interviews can be used to record information such as the

type of reading, writing and math tasks that the learner can perform as well as the extent the task is performed at home, in the community and on the job. Self-evaluations and judgments of the learner's ability are part of the interview process, as well as a topic for discussion in reviewing progress.

Work samples are another type of authentic assessment, where the learner demonstrates his/her applied math and reading skills as well as problem solving skills either individually or in cooperation with other learners. Formal interviews with workers, job analyses, and documentation of citizen responsibilities are used to develop work samples. Criteria for mastery of the competencies or tasks in the work sample are the same as those required in the workplace or life situation. Examples are reading a blueprint to construct a mini-construction project, making a sign using lettering skills, reading a work order and locating parts to repair a wheel cylinder.

Behavioral checklists record observations of demonstrated skills. Personal interaction skills, oral and verbal communication skills can be observed while a learner writes a letter of application for a job, participates in a job interview and conducts a follow-through telephone call.

The Team In the Middle

State and local agencies and the instructor are the "team in the middle". This team is to program design what civil engineers are to maps, roads and bridges. They are accountable to both the funding sources and the learners: accountable to learners for providing them with appropriate educational experiences that will assist them in clarifying and attaining their goals; accountable to funding sources for how they have spent the money.

The "Team" needs ways to accurately and effectively communicate with one another as well as with learners, policymakers, and funding sources. They must be able to design a variety of maps that have common references indicating mileage, natural barriers -- rivers, lakes, mountains, cities and towns, type of roadway, alternate routes, and checkpoints. Serving learners with a wide diversity of goals, learning level and learning styles requires a variety of learning plans. Each plan includes a variety of

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methods to demonstrate learning.

Other professions have their indices of success, completion or some form of indication of benefit -- for instance the physician has client medical charts, the dentist has dental records, the engineer/architect has building plans with schedules of government inspector approval.

Civil engineers would not be able to design roads if they only considered the length, or only the terrain. In researching the treatment of any illness, it would be unacceptable to simply state that patients were seen four to ten times by a physician without explaining what the doctor did each visit. Likewise, Describing an educational treatment only as course completion or the number of contact hours or by a grade equivalent gain score is not a responsible way to determine the value that education has to individual students or society in general.

Assessment should not be just a test, a scale score, a grade level, a percentile or even a stanine. Assessment needs to be a viable process that provides the learner with accurate information on an ongoing basis; at the beginning of a learning process to identify what learning needs to take place; during learning to help the learner in progressing toward attainment of goals; and as a culminating activity to document attainment of specific learning goals and learning outcomes.

Designing an Effective Assessment System

A comprehensive assessment system can be implemented at the local program level that provides the learner, the team in the middle and funding sources the accurate information needed to make decisions that impact learning and programs. It is essential that the system be designed and implemented by the team in the middle with input from the learners, funding sources and policy makers. Here's a checklist of what a comprehensive assessment system should contain:

- Information regarding the learners' stated goals.
- An intake process that can assess the learner's overall ability.
- Background information on prior education and training,
- Measurement of the learner's skills, interests and attitudes

- Information that is comparable across groups of learners.
- A variety of appropriate assessment strategies and instruments
- Standards that specify the accuracy needed for making judgments from observations.
- Techniques for assessing learning in a functional context.
- Assessment components that match the content of assessment with that of the curriculum and instruction.
- Feedback to the learner on competency and goal attainment.

Results from assessment must be conveyed to the learner in their own frame of reference--the learner must understand it. It should be presented at a time when the learner is receptive and can initiate action as a result of the information. Given this knowledge the learner can share in the responsibility for acquiring the new skills, attitudes and behaviors needed to become a more effective person, compete in a global economy and participate as an effective citizen.

Assessment is defined as the process of collecting accurate information in order to make informed decisions about learners and about programs. Authentic assessment provides a base of information to support and reinforce the learner throughout the learning experience. If a comprehensive and systematic assessment plan is implemented at the local program level then program staff will be able to provide for the needs of learners, instructors, and policymakers.

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COMPREHENSIVE ADULT STUDENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM
1990 UPDATE

CASAS was established in 1980 as a consortium of educational providers working in coordination with the California Department of Education to address a need for accurate assessment in a functional context for adult learners and high school students at all levels of alternative and adult basic education programs. Using a learner-centered approach, the consortium then developed a system which provides for the information needs of the learner within an instructional program, as well as standardized assessment results across programs that can be used for program improvement and informed policy decisions. CASAS is the only system capable of assessing basic skill learning in a functional applied context for all levels of adult basic education and high school completion. Over the past few years more than one million learners throughout the United States have been assessed using CASAS instruments.

CASAS has been implemented in over 200 adult education agencies in California and in forty-six other states. CASAS has been validated by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP) of the United States Department of Education and has been approved as an exemplary program for national dissemination through the National Diffusion Network since 1984. In its ten years of applied research and development, CASAS has assisted educational agencies at the local, state, and national levels to meet the needs of diverse and multi-cultural adult learners.

The field-based consortium of forty-seven agencies has fostered a system that has expanded to accommodate new populations being served by adult and alternative education programs, and has responded to assessment needs of national and state initiatives related to adult literacy, workforce basics, immigration and naturalization, welfare reform, the homeless, family literacy, and employment preparation for at-risk youth and displaced adult workers. The consortium provides a comprehensive and built-in adaptability that could not be accomplished efficiently and effectively by one agency alone.

CASAS instruments and procedures are an advancement in more relevant and accurate adult assessment utilizing functional context and authentic assessment approaches.[1] The flexibility inherent in CASAS enables the development of assessments that reflect specific competency-based curricula used in instructional programs in a variety of educational settings so that assessment is linked to specific outcomes. It provides for accurate placement of students into program and level, monitoring of learner progress, and certification of competency attainment.

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[1]Standardized Tests: Their Use and Misuse. (1990, January). *Business Council for Effective Literacy*, No. 22.

There are three major components of CASAS: the CASAS Competency List, the CASAS Curriculum Index and Matrix and the CASAS assessment instruments that include paper and pencil measures, writing assessment, applied performance measures and observation checklists and rating scales. This assessment is linked with curriculum and instruction.

The CASAS Competency List has been developed over an eleven year period and validated based on recommendations from agency staff representing ABE, ESL, High School, Special Education, JTPA, welfare reform, amnesty education, and other educational programs within California and from other states implementing CASAS. The list currently contains 35 competency areas and 203 competency statements within the general functional content areas of Consumer Economics, Community Resources, Health, Occupational Knowledge, Government and Law, and Domestic Skills. It is validated and updated annually by ABE 321 funded programs within California as well as in other states.

The CASAS Curriculum Index and Matrix provides a quick reference system of materials that are adult and youth oriented, life skill based, and have been successfully used by educational agencies in the CASAS Consortium to teach specific competencies at a given program level. All materials included in the Matrix are coded to the CASAS Competency List by program, by level within the program, and by the specific chapter or module within the publication. The Index and Matrix is reviewed and updated annually.

CASAS assessment is designed to provide reliable test items for the construction of instruments that can measure the functional and basic life skills of adults and youth. Initially, CASAS test development was based exclusively on multiple-choice type items in the areas of Reading, Math, and Listening Comprehension. In recent years, CASAS has also developed authentic and applied performance measures of oral proficiency, writing skills, pre-employment and work maturity competencies, and critical thinking skills. Under current development are competencies and assessment instruments that address such skills as "learning how to learn," "organizational effectiveness," and "teamwork."

CASAS multiple choice tests are constructed from an Item Bank of more than 5,000 test items. Each test item has an established reliable and standardized difficulty level based on extensive field testing and analysis. The psychometric theory used to establish this difficulty level is the one parameter model from Item Response Theory (IRT) through which each test item is assigned a difficulty level on a common scale.

The CASAS consortium provides valuable evaluative data on the effectiveness of the system with diverse programs and populations. CASAS will continue to develop and implement quality assessment and indicators of progress toward a national goal of adult literacy in the year 2000.

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CASAS

Comprehensive
Adult
Student
Assessment
System

OVERVIEW 1991

CASAS

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) is a non-profit organization which provides learner-centered curriculum management, assessment, and evaluation systems to education and training programs in the public and private sector. CASAS was established more than a decade ago by a consortium of agencies to provide appropriate assessment tools that are relevant to the life skills needs of adults in today's multi-cultural society.

CASAS has been evaluated by the U.S. Department of Education and is approved as an effective, nationally validated program. It has been funded through the National Diffusion Network (NDN) since 1984 and is recognized as an exemplary program in the area of adult literacy. NDN provides funding to disseminate information about CASAS to programs and agencies that are interested in adopting the system.

The CASAS system is used extensively throughout the country in Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, workplace literacy, family literacy, Job Training Partnership programs, welfare reform, corrections, and amnesty programs. CASAS has developed and designed programs which are suitable for non-English speakers, adults in special education programs, adults preparing to take the GED exam, and adults in the workforce. Over the past few years, more than one million students throughout the United States have been assessed using CASAS instruments and processes.

CASAS provides assessment to place students in programs, diagnose learners' needs, monitor progress, and certify mastery of functional basic skills. Assessment is available to measure the reading, math, listening, and speaking skills, as well as critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills encountered by adults in everyday life and work. The system is based on functional life skills which are validated by the CASAS consortium of agencies.

CASAS is recognized as an exemplary program in the area of adult literacy.

The tests are easy to adminster and to score. Results are reported for a wide range of levels and programs using a common measurement scale. They are free of all grade-level comparisons.

Other key components of the system are the CASAS Competency List and CASAS Curriculum Index and Matrix, training resources, and implementation guides. These materials help agencies develop appropriate curricula and target instruction based on program goals and student needs.

Using the CASAS pre- and post-tests, teachers can measure learning gains after designated periods of instruction. Adult learners from non-readers and those in lower levels of adult literacy up through high school completion literacy levels have demonstrated consistent learning gains using the CASAS system.

CASAS facilitates coordination and provides accountability at the local, state, and national level. To ensure effective implementation of the CASAS system, training and technical assistance are provided.

In the classroom, the workplace, and the community, CASAS is responding to the challenge of providing relevant assessment for adult learners with diverse needs. CASAS will continue to develop and implement quality assessment and indicators of progress toward the national goal of adult literacy in the year 2000.

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PROGRAMS:	The CASAS system is being implemented in programs throughout the country in the areas of ABE and ESL, workplace literacy, family literacy, corrections, special needs learners, amnesty programs, and welfare reform. These projects demonstrate the variety of programs which are benefitting from the CASAS system.
Adult Basic Education/ English as a Second Language	More than 500 agencies nationwide including ABE/321 funded agencies and amnesty education programs utilize CASAS accurately to assess, place, monitor progress, certify students, and plan instruction.
Employability Competency System (ECS)	ECS was developed by CASAS to fill a critical void in the employability skills measurement and instruction of youth and adult students enrolled in JTPA, welfare reform, Carl Perkins, and other employment preparation programs.
Family Support Act/JOBS	Welfare/JOBS agencies are implementing CASAS to meet government guidelines to provide employment preparation and training to Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients for Family Support Act/JOBS programs. The CASAS system is used throughout California with the GAIN (Greater Avenues to Independence) program, and in North Carolina, Oregon, Connecticut, and other states.
Workplace Literacy	CASAS has been successfully implemented in business and industry throughout the country. CASAS provides companies with the tools to determine which employees could benefit from further enhancement of basic skills and to tailor instruction to meet the company's needs.
Family Literacy	CASAS is being utilized to assess the literacy levels of parents and to measure their progress in a variety of family literacy programs including the nationally funded Even Start project.
Special Needs Learners	CASAS has developed the STRETCH Curriculum Assessment Project for adult special needs learners. Tests have been developed to assess vocational, domestic self care, and domestic home care skills of the learners. The CASAS Curriculum Index and Matrix is being expanded to include materials appropriate for this student population.
Corrections	Correctional educators receive training and technical assistance to implement Competency Based Education programs and CASAS testing. In addition, CASAS developed the ESL Placement Test for the Federal Bureau of Prisons which is distributed throughout the federal prison system.
National Diffusion Network	CASAS has been evaluated by the U.S. Department of Education and is approved as an effective, nationally validated program. NDN provides funding to disseminate information about CASAS to programs and agencies that are interested in adopting the system.
National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs	CASAS is designing and collecting data on more than 50,000 adult students in 150 agencies to evaluate adult education programs across the country. This four-year study is funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

For more information: CASAS • 2725 Congress St., Suite 1-M • San Diego, CA • 92110
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